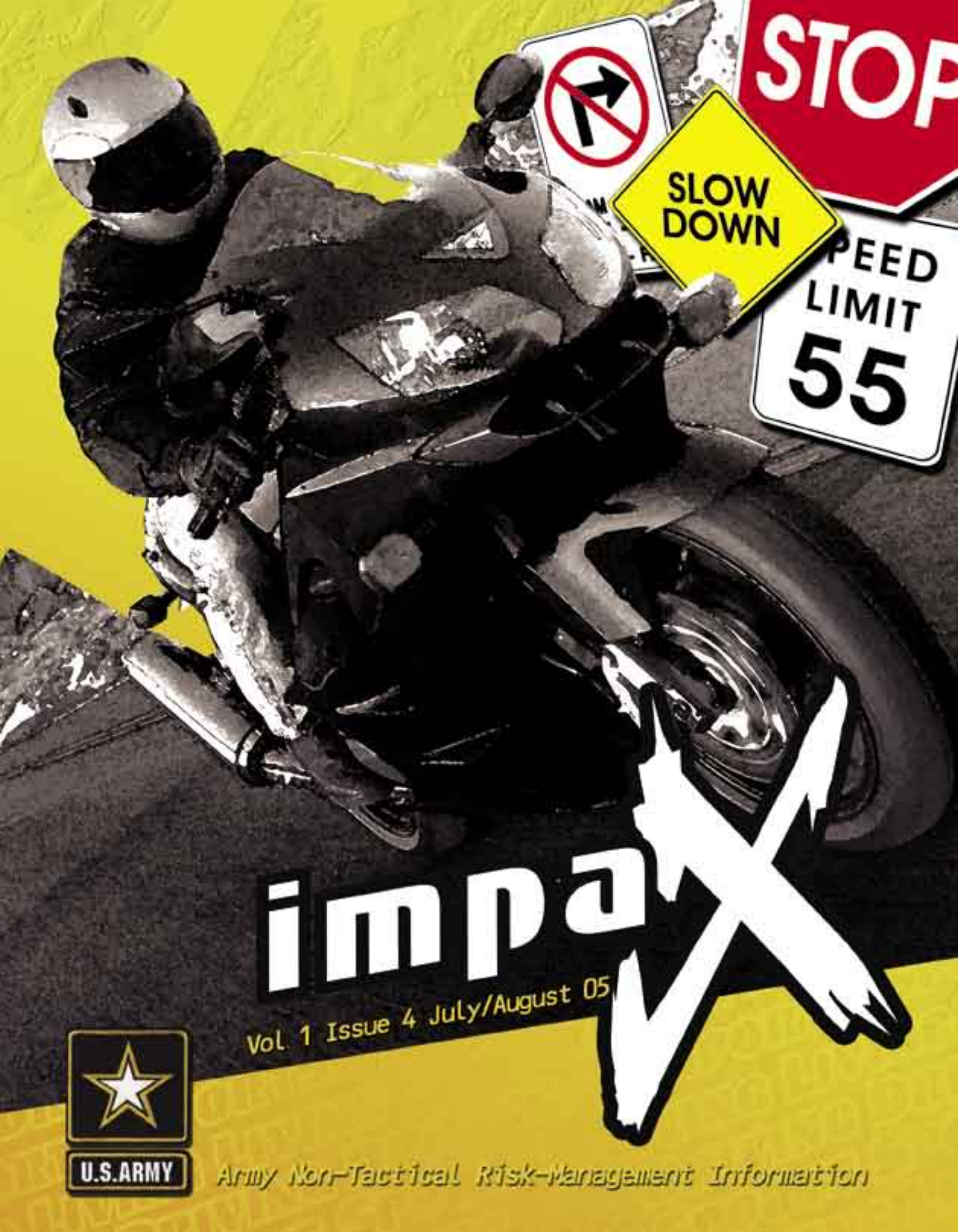

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U.S.ARMY

Army Non-Tactical Risk-Management Information

Why the CRC and What's Next?

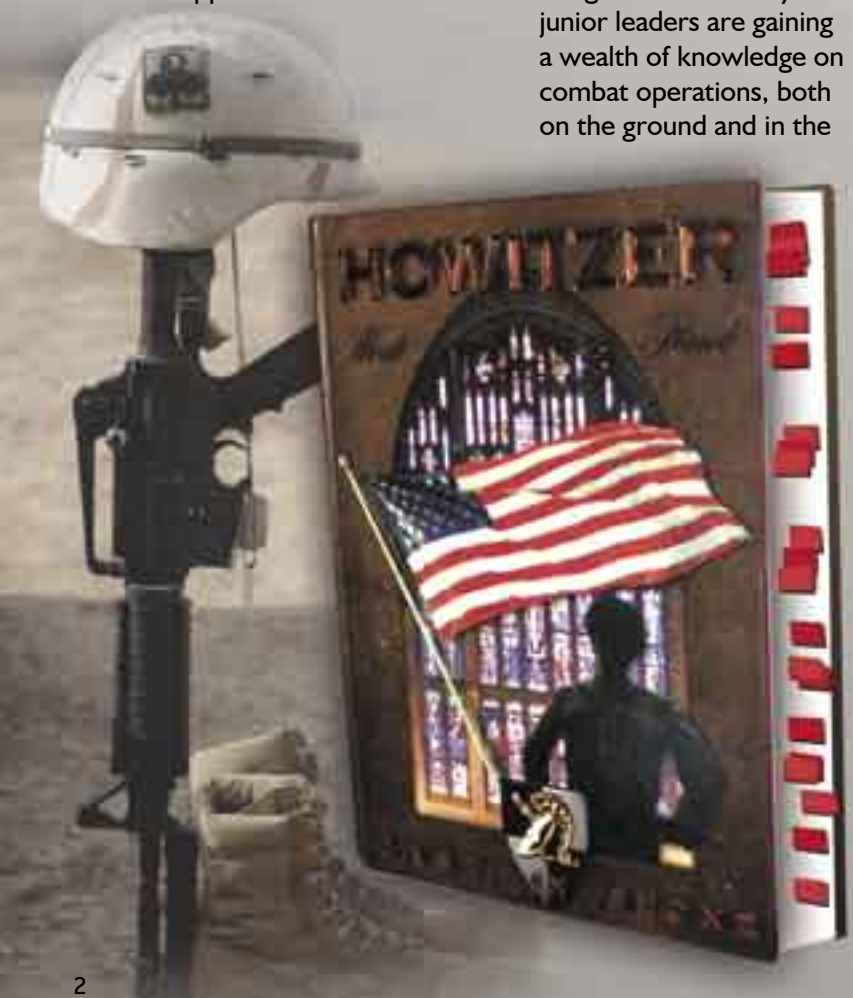
The Army Safety Center recently transformed to the Combat Readiness Center (CRC). Once an organization that focused solely on accidental losses, we're now looking at all losses of combat power. This holistic view is quickly providing a new capability for our Army to understand loss and become more effective through control measures and predictive analysis. So, what's next for the CRC? How will the Army operationalize this new knowledge to better support the combatant?

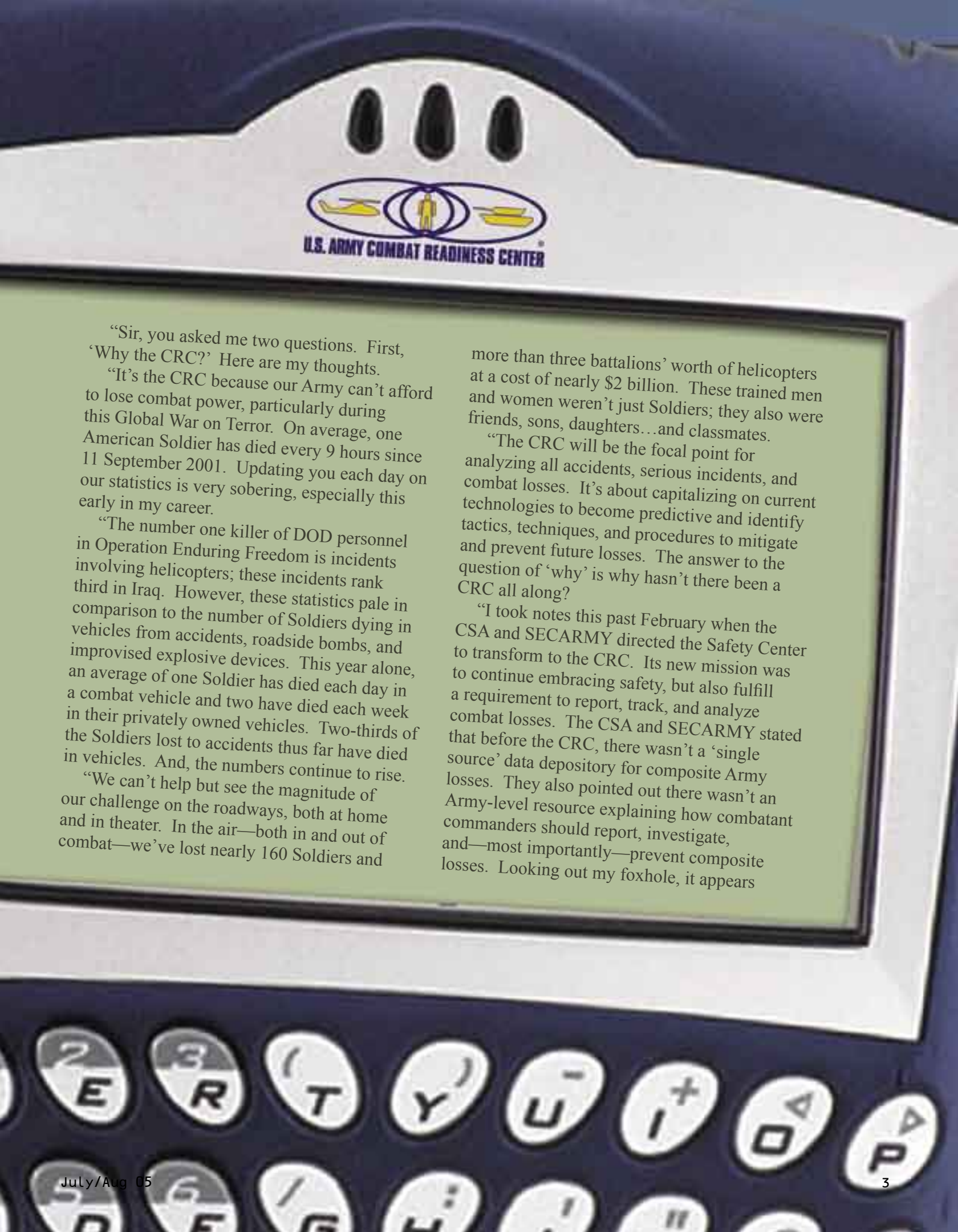
Guidance from the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) and Secretary of the Army (SECARMY) is clear. In their words, we must "manage risk where the rubber meets the road, not be risk averse, and aggressively take the fight to the enemy by better understanding the risk and the required control measures." However, we can't meet this requirement unless the knowledge is relevant and in the hands of the user.

More than 300,000 American Soldiers currently are serving in 120 countries across the globe. Our Army's junior leaders are gaining a wealth of knowledge on combat operations, both on the ground and in the air. They've got a lot to say, and it's important that senior leadership listen as we move forward in our transformation. This point became clear to me as I was preparing my thoughts for this article and dialoging with my aide-de-camp.

My aide is a combat veteran, like many of our young leaders. In his brief career he's served tours in Korea, Afghanistan, and Iraq. I've dragged him around the world with me; he's participated in more than 120 briefings and been closely involved in countless Army-level investigations. So I asked him, "Why the CRC and not the Safety Center?" He quickly responded, "Sir, just last night I placed the twenty-third red tab in my West Point yearbook. Each red tab marks a peer of mine that's died... we need the CRC."

Losing friends is personal. His response was moving, so I decided to dig a little deeper and asked, "From your foxhole, what should be next for the CRC?" Early the next morning I found the following e-mail on my BlackBerry:





"Sir, you asked me two questions. First, 'Why the CRC?' Here are my thoughts.

"It's the CRC because our Army can't afford to lose combat power, particularly during this Global War on Terror. On average, one American Soldier has died every 9 hours since 11 September 2001. Updating you each day on our statistics is very sobering, especially this early in my career.

"The number one killer of DOD personnel in Operation Enduring Freedom is incidents involving helicopters; these incidents rank third in Iraq. However, these statistics pale in comparison to the number of Soldiers dying in vehicles from accidents, roadside bombs, and improvised explosive devices. This year alone, an average of one Soldier has died each day in a combat vehicle and two have died each week in their privately owned vehicles. Two-thirds of the Soldiers lost to accidents thus far have died in vehicles. And, the numbers continue to rise.

"We can't help but see the magnitude of our challenge on the roadways, both at home and in theater. In the air—both in and out of combat—we've lost nearly 160 Soldiers and more than three battalions' worth of helicopters at a cost of nearly $2 billion. These trained men and women weren't just Soldiers; they also were friends, sons, daughters…and classmates.

"The CRC will be the focal point for analyzing all accidents, serious incidents, and combat losses. It's about capitalizing on current technologies to become predictive and identify tactics, techniques, and procedures to mitigate and prevent future losses. The answer to the question of 'why' is why hasn't there been a CRC all along?

"I took notes this past February when the CSA and SECARMY directed the Safety Center to transform to the CRC. Its new mission was to continue embracing safety, but also fulfill a requirement to report, track, and analyze combat losses. The CSA and SECARMY stated that before the CRC, there wasn't a 'single source' data depository for composite Army losses. They also pointed out there wasn't an Army-level resource explaining how combatant commanders should report, investigate, and—most importantly—prevent composite losses. Looking out my foxhole, it appears

there's very little Composite Loss Awareness (CLA) shared across the battlefield.

"Your second question was, 'What's next for the CRC?' Clearly, we must enhance CLA where the rubber meets the road. From my perspective, CLA is defined best as providing and sharing holistic loss data so Soldiers can understand each mission's unique characteristics, similarities, and relevance to previous incidents. For nearly 2 years, senior leaders knew seatbelts weren't being worn in vehicles; aircraft were flying too low and too fast in certain conditions; and hazards often were overlooked in anticipation of enemy engagement. Regardless of the number of policy letters written, every unit relief in place or transfer of authority resulted in learning the lessons anew. How do we become more aware and not repeat our mistakes? How can the CRC provide CLA?

"CLA works only if everyone in the formation understands what can take them out of the fight, regardless of the cause. This understanding exists in the tactical and non-tactical environment when Soldiers know and manage the risks. Composite Risk Management (CRM) insists that all players know the dangers, understand the trends, and comprehend the particular environment in which they operate, combat or not.

Therefore, acquiring CLA is essential to managing composite risk. Leaders then can make the right decisions rapidly and without lengthy, calculated, and metric-based computations ('old safety'). Digital warriors already are familiar with the concept of CLA, and the CRC will enable them in combat. Here's how.

"There's a grid coordinate location associated with every incident report the Army sends and receives, whether the report is generated through the in-theater SIGACTS, ArmyWatch, Joint IED Task Force, Army Shootdown Assessment Team (ASDAT), serious incident reports, or CRC accident reports. The intelligence community has known for many years the value of populating a map with enemy movement and reports. Why hasn't the safety community grasped this same concept? Safety isn't operationalized by doctrine and, therefore, often isn't seen as a composite part of the fight.

"Imagine the Force Battle Command, Brigade-and-Below (FBCB2) or BlueForce Tracker (BFT) overlay on the M1114 HMMWV. These screens look a lot like the interactive moving maps displayed on any navigation system in a newer-model car. The route is planned, the briefings are conducted, and the patrol begins. Using these existing systems, the CRC should live up to its potential and provide our Soldiers with relevant, interactive, and worthwhile information. This same concept applies to the young aviator planning his mission on the Aviation Mission Planning System (AMPS) and op cell monitoring on BFT. The maps generated by these current Army systems should include an overlay of composite loss data.

"Since the CRC will maintain a centralized loss database, it has the capability to plot on these maps a color-coded dot (orange) for every accident occurring in Iraq since the first movement. Additionally, the CRC should receive real-time reports from the IED Task Force and ASDAT or SIGACTS. Those incidents can be plotted easily with another color (red) to indicate enemy activity. Interactively overlaying this information with two basic choices—length of time

(30, 60, or 90 days or 6 or 12 months) and the type of loss (air or ground)—will justify its relevance to the user.

"When a cursor drops over any particular dot, the specifics of the incident will display in a small pop-up window (e.g., 'M1114 Rollover/Speed' or 'OH-58D Shootdown/SA16'). If the user wants more information, a simple double-click immediately will link him to the loss or accident report for that particular incident. The tool's value is that it will remain a single-entry requirement from current databases across the Army. Multiple venues and users will engage simultaneously on the SIPRNET as a software program from current technologies (AMPS and BFT).

"If these maps were printed and posted at every ALOC convoy sign-out location, in the commander's office, or beside every flight operations hazard map, the Army's junior leaders could visualize the importance of not speeding, wearing seatbelts, and rehearsing rollover drills. A majority of orange dots undoubtedly would convince a young convoy commander. For aviators, these orange dots sometimes would justify altitude restrictions, airspeed, or airspace constraints, which often are overlooked.

"What if this information was interactive and with the user at all times? Step back into that M1114 HMMWV and sit at the BFT screen. Along the route, imagine the TC or company commander is scrolling the menus and happens to see on his 10-meter imagery a series of orange or red dots 5 miles ahead. A closer look reveals this road historically has more IED attacks than accidents, or that the orange dots are rollovers caused by excessive speed in oversized vehicles. In seconds he can pick up the radio and tell the other vehicles to reduce their speed for the next 2 miles. Single entry, multiple use, and relevant to the combatant—a real-time, interactive CLA overlay providing the necessary situational awareness and rapid risk mitigating decision skills necessary to cut all types of Army losses.

"One step further would allow unit adaptation. The CRC manages the minimal Army data and map-populated points. However, the software allows catered modifications for any deployed unit that wishes to annotate additional near-miss information or collect close-call data (missed enemy engagements or near mid-air collisions). The CRC will work closely with the software and rapidly modify it to fit the unit's request.

"We've lost the equivalent of three brigades since 9/11, and nearly half these losses weren't in combat. For often unforgiving and preventable reasons, many superb Army leaders are no longer in the fight. We're the best Army in the world and we can do better—our Nation deserves it. Understanding and learning from composite losses is the fastest way our combatant commanders can make the appropriate decisions to prevent the loss of combat power. CLA through digital technology will save lives and enable CRM—it's the way ahead for the CRC and the key to helping our combatant leaders.

"Very Respectfully,
Travis"

So, why the CRC and what's next? Hmm…I couldn't have said it better myself! ★

Joe Smith

BG Joe Smith

Dying for

These are serious times for our Army. Thousands of our comrades are facing danger every day in Afghanistan and Iraq, fighting the War on Terror. Those stateside are training to go to war when they're called. However, many of our warriors will never make it to theater because of preventable accidents on another battlefield—America's roadways.

Over the past few months, POV accidents have continued to climb sharply in our Army. POV accidents claim more Soldiers than any other cause, except combat, year after year. However, this year is different in the steep increase in motorcycle fatalities we've experienced since last October, the beginning of Fiscal Year 2005. As of press time, 62 Class A through C motorcycle accidents had been reported throughout the Army since 1 October 2004. These accidents killed 25 Soldiers.

These 25 Soldiers were loved by someone. They were sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, and buddies. Their loss is felt in formations on posts across the U.S. and will be felt even more keenly on battlefields halfway around the world. The paragraphs below describe Army motorcycle accidents that have happened since the beginning of March 2005—14 Soldiers killed in just over three months. As you will see, motorcycle accidents don't discriminate based on rank.

• Two Soldiers, both sergeants, died in a motorcycle accident when the driver lost control of his motorcycle while speeding and struck a guardrail in the late evening. Both NCOs, who were wearing helmets, were thrown from the motorcycle. The driver had completed Motorcycle Safety Foundation course training and was licensed properly. Alcohol is not believed to be a factor in this accident.

• A private first class died in the late afternoon when his motorcycle collided with a truck that entered the roadway. The Soldier reportedly was participating in a high-speed race with two other motorcycles and was estimated to be traveling at 100 mph. The Soldier was wearing a helmet, but he didn't have a motorcycle endorsement on his driver's license and hadn't attended a motorcycle safety course.

• A sergeant major died in the early morning when he drove his motorcycle into oncoming traffic and collided head-on with an SUV. The Soldier wasn't wearing a helmet. Although toxicology results are pending, speed and alcohol are suspected contributing factors.

• A sergeant first class was killed in the late evening when his motorcycle left the roadway and struck a guardrail before colliding with a post. Alcohol is suspected as a contributing factor, and the motorcycle's speed was estimated at 70 mph. The Soldier was wearing a helmet.

• A staff sergeant was killed in the early afternoon when his motorcycle rear-ended an FMTV traveling in a convoy. The deceased Soldier is suspected to have been speeding. His helmet came off during the accident sequence. The FMTV driver was not cited.

• A sergeant first class died in the morning when a civilian vehicle pulled in front of his motorcycle at an intersection. The Soldier had the right-of-way, but he couldn't avoid broadsiding the left side of the civilian vehicle. He was wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment and also had completed the required motorcycle operator training course at his installation. The civilian vehicle's operator didn't have a driver's license.

• A staff sergeant was killed during the early evening when

Nothing

JULIE SHELLEY
***Countermeasure* Editor**
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It takes only about three seconds for adrenaline to pump into your bloodstream and its effects to be felt all over your body. Your dexterity decreases as your hands begin to shake. You'll probably act irrationally as your focus shifts to how to solve the present problem, because you can't see the big picture.

If this happens to you on the road, you must realize you're suffering from an adrenaline rush. Try not to panic. Breathe deeply and don't try to figure out who's at fault—you or the moron that just pulled out in front of you. You'll only do something stupid, like get into an accident.

his motorcycle hit another vehicle at more than 100 mph. The Soldier wasn't wearing a helmet. The local medical examiner's office noted a distinct odor of alcohol on the Soldier's body, but autopsy results are pending.

• A staff sergeant was killed during the late afternoon when he lost control of his motorcycle at a high rate of speed and hit a retainer wall. The Soldier had completed an approved motorcycle training course. A helmet was found near the accident scene.

• A sergeant died during the early morning when he lost control of his motorcycle at 70 to 80 mph. The Soldier and a civilian passenger had left a party just before the accident and were thrown from the motorcycle. The Soldier suffered fatal injuries when he struck a three-foot stone wall. The passenger hit a street sign and was in critical condition at press time. The Soldier was wearing a non-DOT approved helmet, but the passenger's helmet was DOT approved.

• A staff sergeant was killed during the early morning when he lost control of his motorcycle and hit a fencepost. The Soldier wasn't wearing a helmet and was thrown from the bike.

• A staff sergeant died during the late afternoon when he lost control of his motorcycle in a turn, crossed the oncoming traffic lane, went into the grass, and crashed into a light pole. The Soldier was wearing personal protective equipment. Speed is thought to be a contributing factor. The Soldier completed motorcycle safety training in April 2004.

• A sergeant was killed in the late afternoon when he hit a pickup truck that pulled in front of him at an intersection. The Soldier was traveling at an estimated 65 mph in a 35-mph zone. The Soldier, who wasn't wearing a helmet, suffered fatal injuries when his head impacted the truck's bumper. He was trying to lay the bike down to prevent a collision. The Soldier was on leave and had returned from Iraq the month before the accident. The motorcycle suffered minimal damage.

• A specialist died in the early evening when his motorcycle struck an SUV that backed out of a driveway into the bike's path. A civilian passenger on the bike also was killed. The Soldier, a mobilized National Guardsman, had more than two years' experience riding the accident motorcycle. Both riders were wearing helmets.

These 14 Soldiers were your buddies, your leaders. It's not just about them—it's also about you and your loss. Burying a friend who died in a preventable accident is something no Soldier should ever have to do.

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master

Motorcycle safety is a hot issue for the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR). It got front-burner attention when the unit's motorcycle accident rate topped that in the U.S. Army Special Operations Command a while back. That was a distinction neither the unit nor its commander wanted to maintain—and it was also a human tragedy. Soldiers who performed well in combat were dying in accidents that tore apart families, friends, and fellow Soldiers. Also, what was happening on the highway was touching the runway. The loss of trained aviators couldn't help but affect unit readiness. With the regimental commanding officer (RCO) on the verge of banning motorcycles in the 160th, the unit began taking a hard look at what was causing these accidents. They didn't have to look far.

160th SOAR Regimental Safety NCO SFC Lance Hofmann described the unit's approach to the problem. The first thing they decided to do was identify the problems with the unit's motorcyclists.

"We had a couple of days one month where we set up surprise checkpoints for

ring motorcycle safety

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

our riders, stopping them before they came into the compound," he said. "We pulled them off to the side to see if they had all the required items, such as on-post registration, insurance, a Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) card, and the required safety gear. If they didn't, they weren't allowed onto the compound and had to park outside. We made them aware of what they needed and kept a list of the riders. We didn't do this to punish them; we did this strictly for information. Of the 35 riders we stopped during those two inspections, only four got onto the compound. That showed us we had a problem with the education process."

The problem was largely a lack of awareness, according to Hofmann. Younger riders weren't aware that those under the age of 26 had to have a signed commander's motorcycle agreement. There was also a lot of confusion about the requirement for riders to have taken MSF Basic RiderCourse training. Some riders thought the requirement could be waived until a course became available; others thought it was optional if they already had a motorcycle license. Many riders weren't aware of all the personal protective equipment they were required to wear. Hofmann explained, "When the RCO got that information he asked, 'What can we do to fix this?' We recommended starting our own basic rider course for our Soldiers, providing them 250 cc motorcycles (big enough for beginners to practice on without being too heavy to handle), all the safety gear, and an MSF-certified instructor."

The RCO agreed with the recommendation and provided the needed funding. Locating and contracting an organization to provide the motorcycles for the training wasn't cheap, but according to 160th SOAR Regimental Safety Officer Troy Boonstra, the investment has paid off.

"Providing these motorcycles gives them a chance to take a 'try-before-you-buy' approach to motorcycle riding," he said. He added some of the Soldiers who took the course decided riding wasn't for them. Not having bought a bike, they could walk away from their experience without feeling pressure to ride because of having made a big financial investment. And such choices, Boonstra believes, are every bit as much success stories as those of Soldiers who've taken the course and learned to ride more safely.

This aggressive, positive approach to training has significantly reduced the unit's motorcycle accident rate, according to Hofmann. He credits leadership support, the effectiveness of MSF training, and enforcement of standards for turning a bad news story into something the unit—and its commander—can be proud of. He gave a recent example.

"Just the other day we had a command and staff (meeting) where the RCO talked about a motorcyclist he'd stopped inside our compound. Because the Soldier obeyed all the traffic laws, wore the proper PPE, and had MSF training, the RCO gave him a coin. In the staff meeting, the RCO commented on how that Soldier should've been on the cover of a motorcycle magazine and stated, 'Years ago I wouldn't have seen that. But now I'm coming onto the compound and everybody is meeting or exceeding the standard. We're good to go!'"

The program has proven popular and successful with riders in the 160th, according to Hofmann. He stated, "We've continued to offer that program three to four times a year during the prime riding months. I've never had a class that wasn't filled."

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MOTORCYCLE HELMETS EXPLAINED

What can a helmet do for you?

A helmet is the best protective gear you can wear while riding a motorcycle. All you have to do is put it on. A motorcycle helmet is made up of four basic components that work together to provide protection—an outer shell, an impact-absorbing liner, comfort padding, and a retention system, or chin strap.

The outer shell usually is made of fiber-reinforced composites or a thermoplastic such as polycarbonate. These type materials are tough stuff, and they're designed to compress when they hit anything hard. This compression process disperses energy to lessen the force of impact before it reaches your head. The impact-absorbing liner is found inside the shell. The liner generally is made of expanded polystyrene—the fancy name for Styrofoam. This dense layer cushions and absorbs the shock as the helmet stops, even though your head wants to keep moving.

The comfort padding is the soft foam-and-cloth layer that sits next to your head. It helps the helmet fit snugly and keeps you comfortable. The chin strap is very important—it's the only thing that keeps the helmet on your head in a crash! You must fasten the chin strap securely every time you put your helmet on. Think of it like a seatbelt—it takes only a couple of seconds to put them both on, but they don't work unless you use them correctly.

The more energy the helmet absorbs, the less force there is that reaches your head. And, different helmets react differently to impact forces. Some helmet shells delaminate on impact. Others crack and break if they take a severe hit. Both instances illustrate how a helmet absorbs shock and does its intended job.

Choosing a helmet

The flashiest helmet won't necessarily offer you the best protection. Color, design, and price might factor into your buying decision, but think first about protection and comfort. A wide selection of helmets is available today in a range of prices, and modern helmets are much more lightweight than those in years past. Make sure the helmet you choose bears a DOT sticker, which certifies the helmet meets DOT safety test standards.

A full-face helmet is the optimal choice. These helmets provide the most protection because they cover your entire face and include a face shield to protect your eyes. Some riders prefer the three-quarter open face helmet, which is constructed with the same basic components as the full-face helmet but doesn't offer the same face and chin protection. If you choose an open face helmet, use a snap-on face shield or buy a pair of goggles that can withstand impacts from stones or other road debris. Prescription eyeglasses and sunglasses don't provide sufficient protection, and you might lose them while cruising down the road. "Shorty" half-shell helmets don't protect your head nearly as well as even an open-face helmet and are more likely to come off your head in an accident. These helmets are not recommended for any type of riding.

Storing your helmet

Don't store your helmet near gasoline or cleaning fluids, or in areas where exhaust fumes or excessive heat are produced. These elements can degrade the helmet's protective materials—damage that often goes unnoticed.

Never hang your helmet on the motorcycle's mirrors, turn signals, or backrest. The inner liner is damaged easily from such handling. Don't carry a spare helmet on your motorcycle unless it's well protected or on your passenger's head. Even the bumps and jarring from normal riding can damage a spare.

Store your helmet in a flat, secure area when you take it off. For example, you could place it on the ground, on a rack, or on a shelf. If you store it on the bike's seat, make sure it won't fall off.

Replacing your helmet

Replace your helmet if it's been involved in a crash, because it probably absorbed some impact shock. If you drop your helmet and think it might be damaged, have it inspected. Some manufacturers will inspect and, when possible, repair damaged helmets.

You should replace your helmet every two to four years, even if it hasn't been in an accident. Time and wear deteriorate a helmet's protective qualities. For example, the chin strap might fray or loosen at its attaching points, or the shell could become chipped or damaged. However, the best reason for periodic replacement is that helmets keep improving. The helmet you buy in a couple of years probably will be stronger, lighter, and more comfortable than the one you own now. It might even cost less!

Editor's note: This article was adapted from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's pamphlet "What You Should Know About Motorcycle Helmets." The entire pamphlet, including appropriate helmet sizing information, can be found on the MSF Web site at ***www.msf-usa.org****.*

Comments regarding this article may be directed to Julie Shelley, *Countermeasure* editor, at (334) 255-1218, DSN 558-1218, or by e-mail at julie.shelley@safetycenter.army.mil.

I AM

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Motorcycles were my thing growing up. I raced in motocross competitions just about every weekend and worked for the shop that sponsored me. I fell often enough to learn the hard way that my helmet, gloves, elbow and shoulder pads, boots, long-sleeved jersey, and riding pants really did work. But it wasn't until one night after I joined the Army that I learned just how important my helmet was.

I bought a new Yamaha 650 and ordered a full-face helmet that looked cool and worked. That helmet cost me some money. I always needed more money, which meant I needed to get my sergeant stripes. To get that promotion, I needed to go to night school to further my education and gain an airframe and powerplant license. Riding my motorcycle was part of that process. When I got off duty I rode home, grabbed my books, and then headed off to school on my new bike.

FAST fax

After an accident, evaluate your situation. Are you injured? Are you in harm's way? Can traffic safely avoid you? If you're just around a blind corner or over the crest of a hill, you could be in danger of a second accident. There are many variables in accident situations, and you must think clearly to avoid any further damage or injury.

STILL HERE

But all that changed one night. As I was going down the four-lane road heading toward our house, a teenage girl who'd had her license less than a week came toward me from the opposite direction. She saw me coming her way but thought the car behind her was going to rear-end her, so she turned in front of me, thinking she could make it. She didn't—instead, she hit me head-on.

I flew over the handlebars and into her windshield. The back of my head bounced off her steering wheel, and then I was thrown face-first into a telephone pole on the side of the road. The doctor said that if I hadn't been wearing my full-face helmet, parts of my head would've been smashed into the windshield and the left side of my face would've been left on the pole.

I was in and out of consciousness for the first four days after the accident. I woke up long enough to say I wasn't unconscious the whole time, but I was in a semi-conscious state for the next two weeks. By the time I realized what was going on, close to a month had passed. Although my parents came to see me, I didn't know they were there. Some of my coworkers were there every day to help my wife, who basically lived in my hospital room with me—but I don't remember that either.

I spent more than two months in the hospital receiving physical and occupational therapy. I'd suffered a double brain concussion, and my brain swelled so badly the doctors thought they would have to drill holes in my skull to relieve the pressure. Fortunately for me, the day I was supposed to have the drilling done the swelling went down on its own.

I lost most of my memory and even had to learn how to walk again. The doctor would give me a razor and tell me to shave, but it wasn't until after I was released that I found out the razor didn't have a blade in it. The doctor just wanted to see how good my coordination was—they didn't trust me with a blade.

I also had a problem with my memory. I knew names and people, but that was about it. Part of my therapy was going back to the airfield to learn stuff I once knew. It was only after I was told what an item was that it rang a bell and would come back to me. I'd say, "Oh yeah, that's what that is, now tell me again what it does." Once they'd tell me I'd say, "Oh yeah, that's right, I remember now!"

After a little more than two months had passed the doctor gave me a quick "test." He told me to remember three things: the number 7, ice cream, and blue sky. After he talked to me for what seemed like an hour, he asked what the three items were. Once I told him, he said I was ready to go home.

The things I couldn't do that were listed on my profile made me feel like there was little I could do! No driving for a year, no climbing on top of aircraft, no going inside an aircraft unless the ramp was down and I could walk up it. I couldn't stand for more than 10 minutes, walk more than a mile, run, do physical training, and—for the fear of blackouts—go anywhere alone. My flying and crewing days were over for the next couple of years.

It took years of hard work before I got back to normal—well, about as normal as I ever will be. I still have some minor problems with my memory, but I did make it back on flying status after several years. For me, life is good. I'm living a life that would've ended if I hadn't been wearing my helmet the night that girl turned in front of me.

You hear people argue that wearing a helmet gets in the way of their "personal freedom" or keeps them from hearing or seeing dangers around them. Well, I can tell you from experience that helmets work because I AM STILL HERE.

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The "Night Stalker" flight line at Fort Campbell, Ky., was noisy—but not with the "whumpf—whumpf—whumpf" of spinning rotor blades. The tarmac in front of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment's (SOAR's) hangars was home to anything but helicopters on this cool April morning. In front of one hangar, a golf cart driven by a Soldier drunkenly wove through a series of cones. Beyond the cart, a Chevrolet Impala swapped ends as a Soldier tried to keep the "Skid Monster" under control. Nearby, a couple of motorcycles wound their way through a course as riders maneuvered to stay inside the boundaries. Beside a hangar, fascinated kids watched the sparks and heard the crackles as a lineman showed what happens when a kite string crosses a power line.

SAFETY FUN DA

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

The 160th SOAR's Family Safety Stand-down Day definitely wasn't your "traditional" safety day, but that's not what 160th SOAR Safety Officer CW4 Troy Boonstra and Safety NCO SFC Lance Hofmann were trying to achieve. With their commander's support they'd opted to go "outside the box," skipping the typical PowerPoint briefings to bring in safety-related organizations and businesses for attention-getting, hands-on training. There was a big focus on off-duty safety.

"If we lose a Night Stalker at home, it takes them out of the fight just as surely as if we'd lost them downrange," said 160th SOAR Commander COL Andrew Milani as he opened the safety day. The threat from off-duty accidents is very real for the 160th and other Army units. Accident reports show an alarming number of Soldiers are surviving combat in Iraq only to die shortly after coming home.

It's not just Soldiers who need safety, Hofmann said. He explained that when a family member is injured, Soldiers often have to take time away from work to care for that person. That lost time takes a toll on readiness. Also, family safety touches deployed Soldiers. He explained that Soldiers who know their families have been taught to avoid injuries and handle emergencies can better focus on their combat missions.

Although safety is serious business it doesn't have to be boring, so Boonstra and Hofmann planned many of the day's events to be both educational and fun. Much of the focus was on driving safety.

DUI golf carts

Golf carts aren't exactly high-performance vehicles, but they are entertaining when the driver can't keep one under control at 5 mph. Handicapped with a pair of "beer goggles" that

simulated a drunk's view of the road, drivers had a tough time turning, backing, and keeping the cart between the lines of cones.

It might've looked funny, but there was a point to be made, according to Moore County, Tenn., Deputy Justin Grogan. He explained that drunk drivers normally underestimate how badly they're impaired. However, when sober drivers wear beer goggles, they can see how badly alcohol affects their ability to control a vehicle. And, because they're sober, they can measure the danger of drunk driving with a clear mind.

And there was an even more realistic—and entertaining—test scheduled for the afternoon to show just what alcohol does to a person's thinking and skills.

Duty drunks

It's not often Soldiers can get drunk WITH their commander's blessing. But then, how else could they show alcohol's effects or prove the usefulness of the unit's Legal Limit BreathScan breathalyzers? Getting drunk was a tough job, but somebody had to do it, so four 160th Soldiers volunteered.

Each Soldier was given several beers to drink, along with several breathalyzers to keep track of their "progress." Set for a .04 blood-alcohol content—half the legal limit—the breathalyzer's crystals changed color as advertised. To add a little spice to the event, each duty drunk got several chances to maneuver his way through a line of cones on a child's scooter.

While the heckling was merciless, the exercise showed that even Type-A Army Aviators aren't bulletproof when it comes to alcohol. It also showed the effectiveness of the breathalyzers, which are provided free to unit members and which Hofmann has credited with reducing drunk-driving incidents.

"Our DUIs are down significantly," he said. "Most of the problems we're seeing are with younger Soldiers who've recently been assigned to the regiment. We just haven't had a chance to get hold of them yet."

Drugs, belts, and bikes

Alcohol isn't the only drug that threatens Soldiers and their families. Tennessee Army National Guardsman CW3 Robert Angus walked kids through a special trailer with exhibits that displayed some paraphernalia of the drug culture. He spoke to kids about the dangers posed by illegal drugs and the importance of resisting peer pressure to get involved.

Soldiers and their families got a vivid demonstration of the value of seatbelts. A state trooper placed two unbelted dummies—one representing an adult and the other a small child—inside a special rollover demonstration vehicle. As the vehicle rolled over, the adult dummy flew out the driver's-side window and was crushed beneath the vehicle. The child dummy flew out the passenger-side window and landed several feet away. The message was simple: People who don't wear seatbelts often get thrown into the car's path or back onto the roadway during rollover crashes.

A crumpled motorcycle rested on its side a little further down the tarmac, offering mute testimony to the results of reckless riding. Bill Gleason, the 160th's Motorcycle Safety Foundation-certified instructor, pointed to the crumpled remains of the motorcycle and said, "We didn't just find this bike and drag it out here for shock effect. This bike belonged to a Soldier in the 160th. We brought it out here because when you see something like this and know it was a buddy, you don't forget that."

On a table near the wreck rested a novelty motorcycle helmet with a large slice cut out of it. Gleason picked up the helmet, squeezed its thin padding, and noted the flimsiness of the shell. He also pointed out the absence of any DOT certification safety stickers and commented, "I'll bet this sold for all of $10 or $12. We've got a dealer who's giving these away to new buyers—which should tell you something about how much they're worth. If you wear a helmet like this you might as well go ahead and sign up as an organ donor."

Not all of the day's exhibits were directed at off-duty safety. A variety of commercial vendors demonstrated safety equipment such as fall-protection harnesses designed to prevent on-the-job injuries. The day's goal was for people to understand that choosing to be safe is often harder than taking a quicker, less-safe shortcut. However, making that "hard right" decision, as Hofmann called it, is the best way to avoid a life littered with bad consequences.

The day's effectiveness might never be measured fully, Hofmann explained. There's no way to know how many accidents were prevented because people used what they learned. Still, Hofmann feels a deep sense of satisfaction in knowing the unit spent the time, effort, and money to show its Soldiers and families it cares about them.

"If we stop one injury, if a child safely escapes a house fire, if a person is safer boating because they're properly wearing a life jacket, if a child is saved because their safety seat was checked to ensure it was installed properly, then this day was a success," he said.

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Editor's note: For more information on the 160th SOAR's Family Safety Stand-down Day, contact SFC Lance Hofmann at (270) 798-1915, DSN 635-1915, or by e-mail at hofmannL@soar.army.mil. CW4 Troy Boonstra can be contacted at (270) 798-1938, DSN 635-1938, or by e-mail at boonstraT@soar.army.mil.

I've been in the Army for more than 18 years, and I've seen my fair share of accidents and even had a few myself. Drastic changes have taken place during my time in uniform, but one thing has stayed the same: the Soldier mentality of "it'll never happen to me." When "it" happens, however, the consequences are sometimes too hard to bear. My friend John learned the hard way—his wife died in an accident, and the authorities blamed him for her death.

IT CAN HAP

N PPEN TO YOU

I met John at Fort Bragg, N.C., in 1994 during in-processing. In conversation we found out we were going to the same unit, we both were married, and we each had two kids. Since neither of us knew anyone in the area, our families began spending time together and we quickly became good friends.

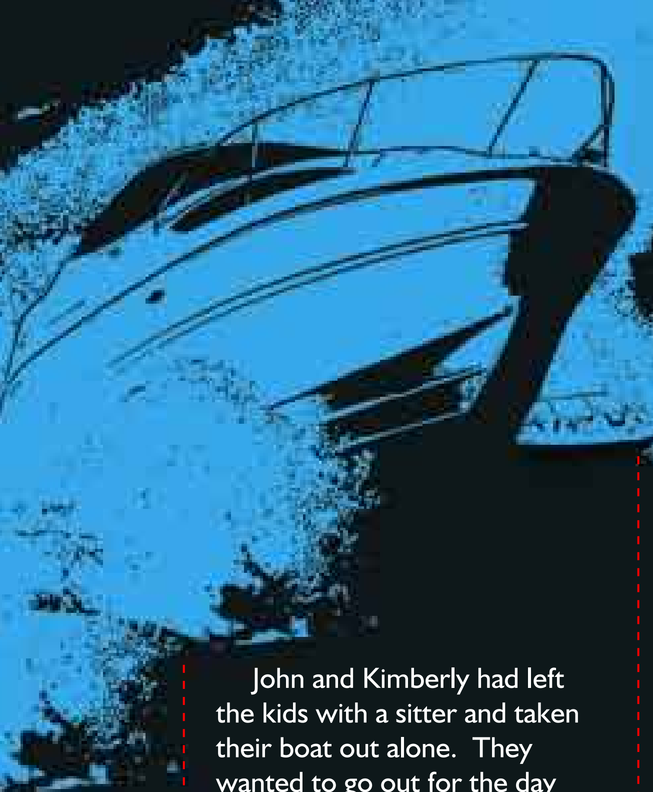
John and his wife, Kimberly, met in high school and had been married for more than eight years. Their children, Matthew and Laura, became my kids' best friends. Our families did everything together during our tour at Fort Bragg.

When our families PCSed—mine to Fort Campbell, Ky., John's to Fort Drum, N.Y.—we swore to keep in touch. John and I didn't talk as much as we'd planned, but my wife talked with Kimberly on a regular basis. In June 1998 my wife told me Kimberly had called, bragging about a new speedboat she and John just bought. Of course, I was jealous.

Just a couple months later, in August 1998, my wife got a very distressing phone call while I was at work. John and Kimberly had been in a boating accident, and Kimberly was dead. When my wife called my office, she was so upset I could barely understand her. We left for Fort Drum after my leave was approved, not really sure what we'd find there.

"WITNESSES SAID JOHN'S BOAT JUST 'EXPLODED' AS IT HIT THE OTHER BOAT, DESTROYING THEM BOTH."

DAVID HARTZELL
Tactical Safety Specialist
3rd BDE, 4ID
Fort Carson, Colo.



FAST FACT

John and Kimberly had left the kids with a sitter and taken their boat out alone. They wanted to go out for the day on the lake, just the two of them, to play with their new toy. It was John's first boat; since it was new, he didn't really know what it could do. John spent most of that day looking for a race. He finally found his match, and the race was on.

Before long the two boats were skimming across the water, and John was winning. I can only imagine the prideful smile on his face as he showed off for his bride. But John didn't see the other boat coming out of a small cove, and the family in that boat didn't know there was a race going on.

Witnesses said John's boat just "exploded" as it hit the other boat, destroying them both. Kimberly was crushed on impact and died instantly. John was knocked unconscious but remained afloat in his life jacket. The woman in the other boat died in her husband's arms as they floated in the lake. Their kids were alive, but in shock. Other boaters pulled everyone out of the water, and someone called a life-flight helicopter. However, it was too late for Kimberly and the other woman.

John had just been discharged from a two-day hospital stay for a head injury when my wife and I got there. We picked up the kids from the sitter's house and took them home. The most painful moment was when John explained to Laura that her mom wasn't coming back.

A few months later, John was charged with manslaughter for the deaths of Kimberly and the other woman. It seemed John would go to prison and leave Matthew and Laura parentless. However, at the trial, the jury found John not guilty.

We all were relieved, but the damage was done. The most important person in John's life was gone—the girl he had loved since he was 15 years old—all because he wanted to impress her. Matthew and Laura would grow up without a mother, knowing their dad was to blame.

Months after the accident, John was still deeply depressed. He told me he couldn't remember what happened that day. He kept asking me, "Why did this have to happen to Kimberly?" Matthew and Laura weren't doing well in school and were being teased by their classmates because of the trial coverage. They didn't seem like the same people I'd known back at Fort Bragg just a year before.

John left the Army in 1999, hoping to make a fresh start. We've lost touch since, and maybe that's for the best. It was really hard for

TROUBLED WAT

ANONYMOUS

A few years ago, a good friend of mine was severely injured in a boating accident. He was riding double on the back of a jet ski and jumped off to get back on a houseboat anchored in a cove. As he approached the houseboat, someone started the engines to move the boat out of some weeds. My friend's feet became entangled in the propellers, and he suffered severe damage to both feet. The accident literally shredded both his Achilles tendons.

In just seconds, my friend went from an active lifestyle to

Did you know that more than 70 percent of boating accidents in the U.S. are attributed to operator error? Or that in 2002, nearly 9 of 10 drowning victims weren't wearing life jackets? And that drinking and boating is just as deadly as drinking and driving?

Be sure to check out the U.S. Coast Guard's boating safety Web page at http://www.uscgboating.org. They have a wealth of information on vessel safety checks, personal flotation devices, and boating under the influence.

John to talk, because I reminded him of the time when our families were whole. Hopefully he's doing better now, but I'm sure he'll never be the same.

When I think back to our time with John and Kimberly, I realize how naive we all were. We thought our friendship would last. We thought our kids would grow up happy. John thought he'd be married to Kimberly forever. In an instant, John's mistake changed everything.

Bad things happen when we least expect it. It's foolish to tell yourself you'll never be in an accident or think it only happens to people you don't know. Whether you're at work or enjoying your time off, take time to think about John and what he lost that day on the lake. His accident, like most others, could've been prevented. First, however, we must realize we're not invincible to understand we're at risk. Don't kid yourself by thinking "it'll never happen to me."

Editor's note: Many of the facts, including names, locations, and dates, were changed in this story to protect the privacy of those who experienced this tragedy and continue to live with its aftermath. The author wishes to remain anonymous for the same reason.

Comments regarding this article can be directed to the editor at (334) 255-2688, DSN 558-2688, or by e-mail at robert.vanelsberg@safetycenter.

one that required years of surgeries and rehabilitation just to walk without a cane. In April 2005, an activated National Guardsman lost one of his legs when he fell overboard from a running pontoon boat. Like my friend, the Soldier's leg was struck by the boat's propeller. Unfortunately, surgery couldn't repair the damage; this Soldier most likely will be lost from the fight permanently.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), more than 700 Americans died in boating accidents in 2000. The other USCG statistics are sobering:

- 519 boaters drowned in 2000. Of those, 445 weren't wearing personal flotation devices (life jackets).
- 83 percent of fatalities in 2000 occurred on boats less than 26 feet long.
- 84 percent of fatalities occurred on boats where the operator hadn't completed a boating safety course.
- Personal watercraft accounted for more than 35 percent of all boating injuries in 2000.
- Canoes and kayaks accounted for 15 percent of all boating fatalities in 2000.

Most of these accidents could've been prevented. At the very least, 445 of the 519 people who drowned probably would be alive today if they'd worn a life jacket. The following tips are provided by the USCG to help boaters reduce injuries, fatalities, and accidents on the water.

- Wear your life jacket. Capsizings and overboard falls account for more than half of all recreational boating fatalities each year. Life jackets are effective in preventing drowning.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages while boating. Alcohol use affects judgment, vision, balance, and coordination. USCG incident data show that in fatalities involving alcohol use, more than half the victims capsized their boat and/or fell overboard. Additionally, more than one-third of all fatalities resulting from a collision involved alcohol.
- Complete a boating safety course. Approximately 70 percent of reported boating incidents involve operator-controlled factors. The primary causes are operator inattention, carelessness and recklessness, inexperience, unsafe speeds, and failure of the operator or passenger "lookout" to identify hazards. Boating safety courses teach the regulatory and statutory rules ("rules of the road") for the safe operation and navigation of recreational boats.

Comments regarding this article can be directed to the editor at (334) 255-2688, DSN 558-2688, or by e-mail at robert.vanelsberg@safetycenter.army.mil.

Dad Overbo

It was one of those "perfect" summer afternoons. The July sky was clear and blue, the sun was shining, and the wind was so slight no waves were breaking. My family and I were in a pontoon boat on the local lake. We'd just finished swimming and had decided to fish at one of our favorite spots.

We pulled up to our fishing spot and dropped the anchors. The spot was located in a small cove across from the marina. The water was about 20 to 25 feet deep, and many trees were decaying in the water. The cove was also full of weeds.

We baited our hooks and took our spots around the boat. My mother decided to fish off the right back side of the boat. This position wasn't the best spot to take advantage of the plentiful fish, but that was just fine for my mom. My brother decided to fish off the right front side of the boat. This position gave him the best angle to reach the fish. My father decided if he couldn't have the right front spot, he would fish from the boat's right middle. Like the front, this spot provided an excellent angle. However, this spot was directly in front of the gate where we exited and entered the boat. I fished from the front deck, which was outside the main boat. Although this wasn't the best spot, I still could reach the area where all the fish were.

We'd been fishing for several hours, and each of us had caught a lot of fish. My mom and I had stopped fishing and were talking while we watched my dad and brother. We decided to go back to camp for the evening after the next fish was caught.

"He resurfaced after what seemed like an eternity."

Now it was a contest to see who'd catch the last fish. We all went back to our spots and, on the count of three, everyone cast their lines. But, all of a sudden, my dad was gone. The gate had swung open as he leaned against it and he fell into the water. He resurfaced after what seemed like an eternity.

We'd had enough by then, and we quickly returned to camp so my dad could dry off. The rest of us tried to calm down. Later that evening, we returned to the spot with a depth locator. The water was about 15 feet deep where my dad fell in—well over his head!

After that July day, my family began to practice different safety precautions when we went out on the boat. From then on we always wore our life jackets.

...oard!

PAMELA HOUK
CP-12 Safety Intern

Before we'd had them on the boat, but we didn't wear them. We all thought we were good swimmers and didn't need them. We also began taking dog collars aboard the boat. After we boarded, we used the dog collars to secure the gates so they wouldn't open accidentally if someone leaned on them. Lastly, we stopped wearing tennis shoes on the boat—instead, we wore water shoes. These type shoes aren't as heavy when they fill with water, allowing the wearer to resurface quickly if they fall overboard.

I now think about my dad every time I get on a boat. I always wear my life jacket, and I also check the gate latches to make sure they don't open on some unsuspecting passenger. I learned that July afternoon that a relaxing day on the lake can turn into a tragedy if you don't take the proper safety precautions.

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UNFULFILLED POTENTIAL ALMOST A SOLDIER

WILLIAM S. DEL SOLAR
CP-12 Safety Intern

It's summer again, and Soldiers and their families are seeking relief from the hot sun at local pools, lakes, and the beach. Sometimes, however, fun turns to tragedy. The story below describes the drowning death of a young Army recruit.

Drownings continue to claim far too many of our Soldiers every year. Most recently, a second lieutenant drowned while fishing in a river with several other Soldiers. When a dam seven miles upstream released a large amount of water, the lieutenant slipped and fell off a rock. He was swept away by the rush of water and had trouble swimming against the current. Although three NCOs attempted to rescue the lieutenant, he disappeared under the water. His body was found the next day.

This lieutenant was just beginning his career as an Army officer—a career that ended far too soon because of carelessness. Signs posted at the accident location read NO SWIMMING, WATER SUBJECT TO RISE WITHOUT NOTICE, and DO NOT WALK ON THE ROCKS. Similarly, the recruit in the story below chose to swim in an unguarded area even though he knew the risks.

The summer weather was perfect for a day at the beach—sunny, temperature in the mid-80s, and not too humid. Beach 11, located at the end of Presque Isle State Park on the southern shores of Lake Erie, Pa., is a family beach. With its gently sloping bottom and few waves, many families take "mini-vacations" at Beach 11 during the summer.

On this particular day, some swimmers in an unguarded area near Beach 11 reported that a friend had gone underwater, but didn't come back up. Lifeguards and Coast Guard personnel found the missing swimmer about 45 minutes later only a short distance away, in about 12 feet of water.

The young man was playing Frisbee with his friends. He was a non-swimmer, so he stayed in what he thought was shallow water. He didn't know the lake bottom at Beach 11 ripples in a series of gentle ridges parallel to the shore and drops off several feet with each ridge. He was standing in chest-deep water when he dove to retrieve a Frisbee thrown just beyond his reach. Diving out to get the Frisbee, he accidentally got in over his head.

You almost knew this young man. He was a Soldier-to-be in the Delayed Entry Program. He was supposed to leave for basic training at the end of the summer. He could've been your best buddy. But he chose to swim in an unguarded area and paid for that decision with his life. I spent 30 minutes diving to that murky bottom, looking for him in vain. I still remember how heavy his body was as I carried the stretcher off the beach.

Don't let the same thing happen to you. Don't swim in unguarded areas. Don't be someone else's burden.

The author currently is assigned with the 2d Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (LI), Fort Drum, N.Y. He may be contacted by e-mail at william.s.delsolar@us.army.mil.

road trip!

SUSAN JERVIS
Safety Engineer
Army Materiel Command
Fort Belvoir, VA

Joyce sits down to prepare her travel orders on the Defense Travel System (DTS). She has to complete her travel authorization and make air, car, and hotel reservations to attend a management class in Chicago, Ill., at the end of the month. Since it's been more than a year since Joyce has been on official government travel, she has lots to remember as she works through DTS.

After she logs in to the automated system, she's ready to start setting up her travel itinerary. Since the class starts on Tuesday morning, she's planning to leave directly from her office and fly to Chicago Monday afternoon. Luckily the trip to the airport won't coincide with rush-hour traffic. The trip from her office to the airport is only 25 miles. However, since Joyce isn't familiar with the roads and exits, she'll need to plan her route in advance and allow extra travel time.

As she continues with DTS, she begins to search for airline flights. Her first choice is a non-stop flight that arrives mid-afternoon. Unfortunately there isn't a government fare available, so she's forced to continue searching for alternate flights. Her next-best option arrives in Chicago right in the middle of rush-hour traffic. That timing will definitely create some challenges since Joyce must travel from the airport to the suburbs to attend the course.

Traveling in an unfamiliar area creates some potential hazards Joyce must manage. She will need to carefully plan her route before arriving in Chicago. She can look up directions on the Internet and study them to become familiar with the major roads and intersections before arriving. Planning ahead will prevent her from constantly looking at the map and trying to figure out directions while trying to negotiate the unfamiliar roads and traffic patterns. Another option for managing this potential risk is for Joyce to have dinner at the airport and wait for the rush-hour traffic to dissipate before starting her drive to the suburban hotel. At this stage Joyce isn't sure which option she'll take, but she'll definitely think about the safest way to travel from the airport to the hotel before her plane lands in Chicago.

Returning to her DTS screen, Joyce searches for hotels located near the course site. One hotel appears to be next door to the class location, but after studying the hotel Web site she isn't very comfortable with that choice. The picture shows all the guest rooms open to the building's exterior. When she's traveling by herself, Joyce doesn't like the idea of staying in hotels where all the room doors open to an outside parking area. And since she's not familiar with the hotel and its surrounding area, she can't be sure the hotel has good exterior lighting and is located in an area that's safe to walk after dark.

Joyce decides she'd better look for another option. After scanning several other Web sites, she finally settles on a hotel about a mile from the course location. Their Web site indicates the hotel has an underground parking garage with an elevator to the lobby area. Based on the pictures, all the hotel rooms open into an interior hallway. Joyce also likes that the hotel rooms have exterior windows, but no balconies. She feels more secure with this choice and takes the necessary actions to finalize her reservation.

With her air and hotel reservations taken care of, Joyce needs to reserve a rental car. As she works through the reservation screen, she begins to consider the car's size. She wants to request an upgrade to a mid-size car. The cost isn't much more than a compact model, and the safety offered by a larger car is much greater in a potential accident situation.

Rental cars also present challenges to the driver. Each car has unique knob controls, and the placement of these controls can vary widely between cars. Trying to locate the dimmer switch or wiper blade control in a rental car can divert the driver's attention away from the road and create a hazardous situation. In addition, Joyce won't be used to the way the car handles in the rain, which could be a potential issue if the weather is bad. Joyce makes a mental note to herself—she'll definitely need to take the time to adjust the mirrors and familiarize herself with the controls before leaving the rental lot.

As Joyce finalizes her plans on DTS, she's more keenly aware that traveling in an unfamiliar location presents a number of potential hazards she routinely takes for granted as she travels between her home and work each day. But with proper planning and giving careful thought to the hotel, car, and travel routes, Joyce ultimately will increase the safety of her trip. Remember, "be safe, make it home" applies to your TDY station just as it does your regular job and duty station.

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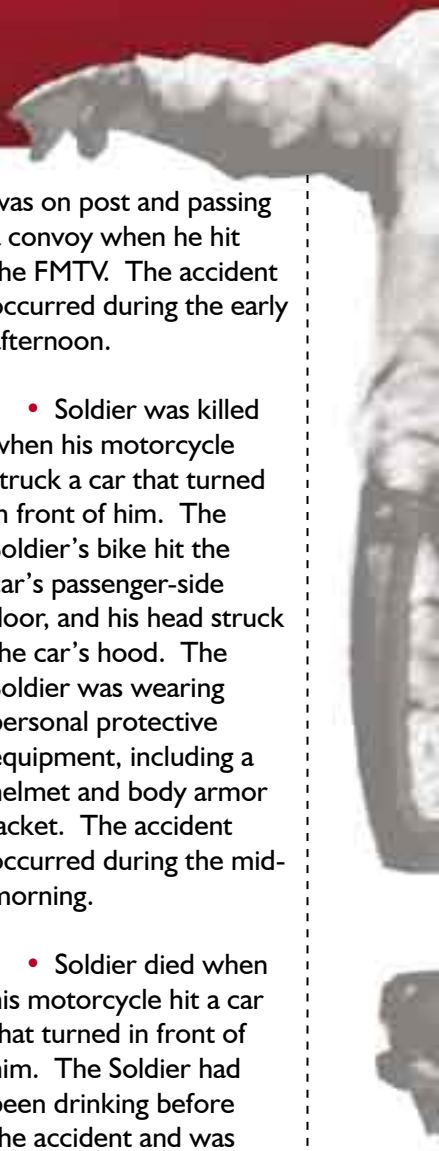
The following reports reflect accidents that have happened to Soldiers in their privately owned vehicles, during recreational activities, and in other non-tactical environments.



POV

Class A

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his vehicle ran off the road, crossed a median, and flipped over into a creek. The Soldier died in the local hospital. The accident occurred during the mid-afternoon.

- Soldier was killed when his vehicle ran off the road, struck an embankment, and overturned. The Soldier wasn't wearing a seatbelt and was ejected from the vehicle. The accident occurred on an interstate during the early morning.

- Soldier died when the vehicle he was riding in ran off the road, struck a tree, and burst into flames. The accident occurred during the late evening.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his vehicle ran off the road, rolled over, and hit a tree. The Soldier, who was wearing his seatbelt, lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a curve. The accident occurred during the early evening.

- Soldier was killed after he was hit by a van. The Soldier had pulled onto the shoulder of an interstate to secure some furniture he was transporting in his pickup truck. The Soldier was struck by the van as he stood behind his truck. The accident occurred during the mid-afternoon.

- Soldier died when another vehicle hit his POV, which had overturned on an interstate. The Soldier had just gotten out of his POV when the other vehicle hit it. The Soldier was struck by his POV and suffered fatal injuries. The accident occurred during the early morning.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his pickup truck flipped over. The Soldier wasn't wearing his seatbelt and was ejected from the truck, which rolled on top of him. The accident occurred during the early morning.

- Soldier was killed when his POV collided head-on with another vehicle. Both vehicles were struck by a tractor-trailer after the initial collision and caught fire. The Soldier wasn't wearing his seatbelt. The accident occurred during the early morning on an interstate.

POM

Class A

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his motorcycle hit a pickup truck at a high rate of speed. The Soldier reportedly was racing another motorcyclist when the pickup pulled in front of him. He was wearing a helmet, but wasn't licensed to drive a motorcycle. The accident occurred during the mid-afternoon.

- Soldier was killed when his motorcycle collided head-on with an SUV. The Soldier was driving in the wrong lane on a four-lane highway. He wasn't wearing a helmet. The accident occurred during the early morning.

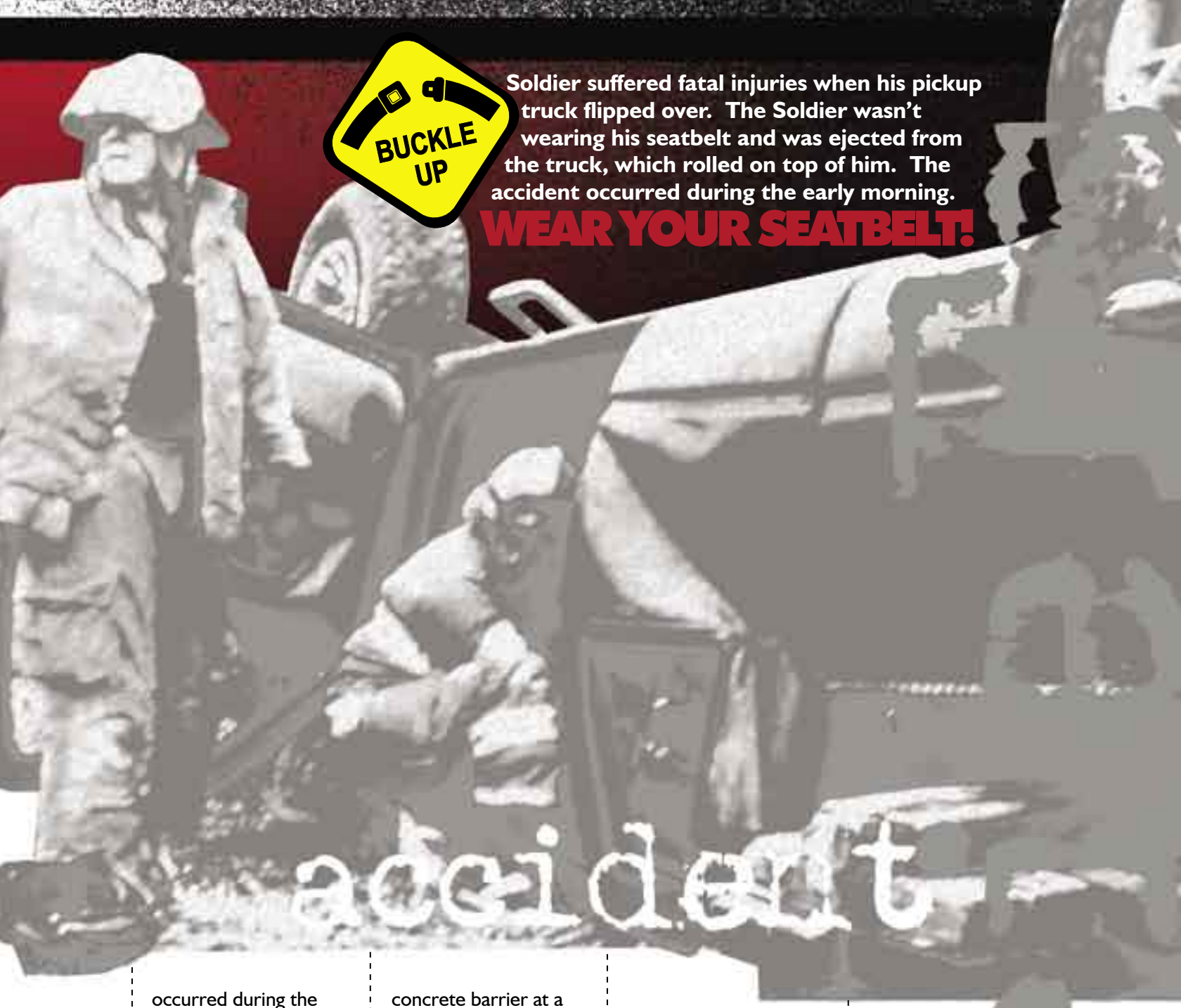
- Soldier died when his motorcycle ran off the road, struck a guardrail, and overturned at a high rate of speed. The Soldier was wearing a helmet. The accident occurred during the late evening.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his motorcycle hit the rear of an FMTV. The Soldier was on post and passing a convoy when he hit the FMTV. The accident occurred during the early afternoon.

- Soldier was killed when his motorcycle struck a car that turned in front of him. The Soldier's bike hit the car's passenger-side door, and his head struck the car's hood. The Soldier was wearing personal protective equipment, including a helmet and body armor jacket. The accident occurred during the mid-morning.

- Soldier died when his motorcycle hit a car that turned in front of him. The Soldier had been drinking before the accident and was traveling between 50 and 70 mph in a 30-mph zone. His blood-alcohol content was twice the legal limit, and he wasn't wearing a helmet. The accident occurred during the late evening.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his motorcycle ran off the road and struck a fencepost. The Soldier wasn't wearing a helmet and was thrown off the bike. The accident



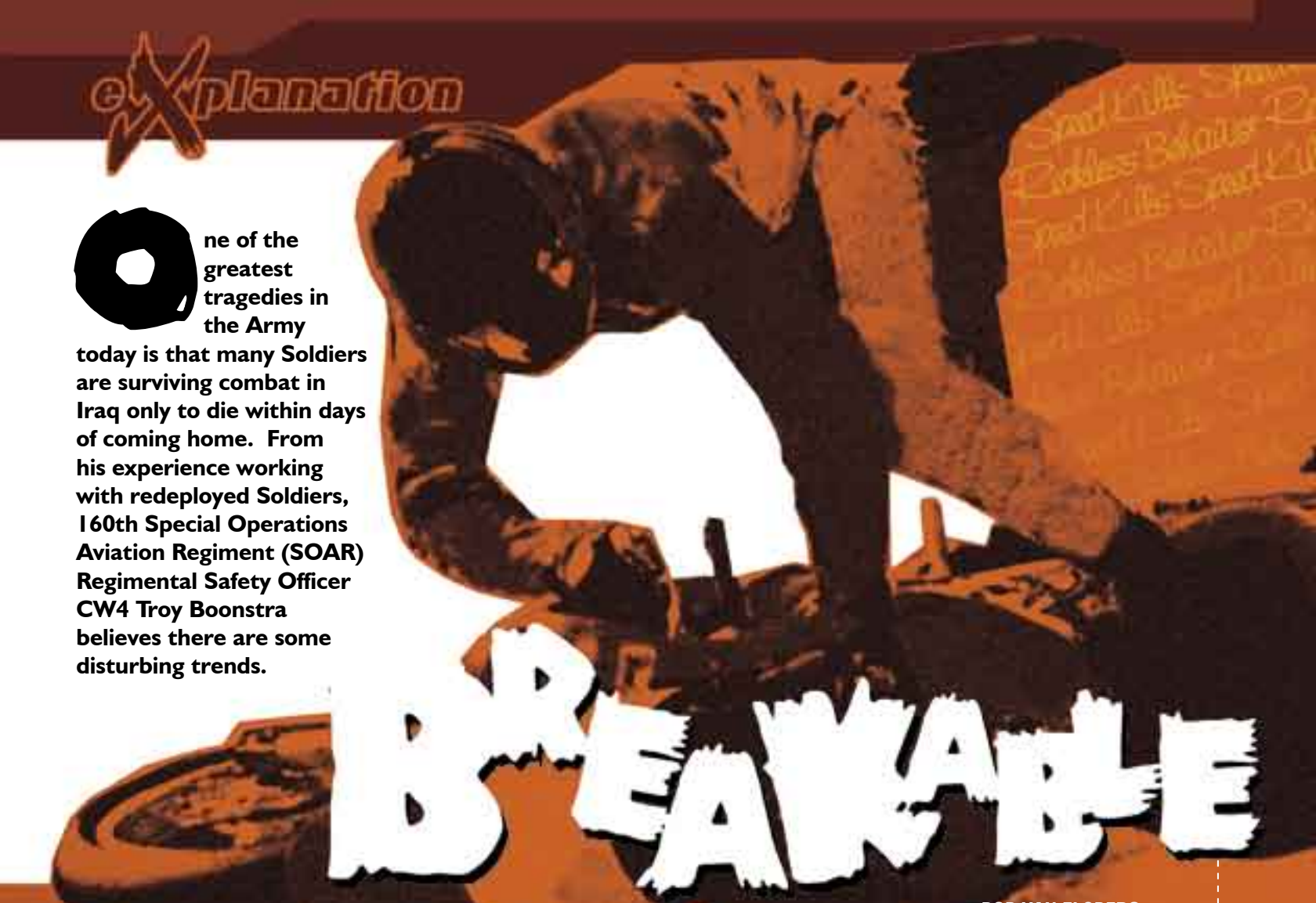
occurred during the early morning.

- Soldier was killed when his motorcycle ran off the road and hit a retainer wall. The Soldier reportedly was driving at a high rate of speed. Helmet use is unknown. The accident occurred during the early evening.

- Soldier suffered fatal injuries when his motorcycle struck a concrete barrier at a high rate of speed. The Soldier was wearing a helmet. The accident occurred during the early morning.

Class B

- Soldier was seriously injured when his motorcycle struck the side of a pickup truck at a high rate of speed. The Soldier was attempting to pass the truck on the right shoulder of the highway and reportedly was traveling at 75 mph in a 45-mph zone. The Soldier wasn't wearing a helmet and was thrown 75 feet. He suffered severe head and chest injuries and remained in a coma as of press time. The accident occurred in the late morning.



UNBREAKABLE

One of the greatest tragedies in the Army today is that many Soldiers are surviving combat in Iraq only to die within days of coming home. From his experience working with redeployed Soldiers, 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (SOAR) Regimental Safety Officer CW4 Troy Boonstra believes there are some disturbing trends.

BOB VAN ELSBERG
Managing Editor

"We're noticing the 'decompression' process when the guys come home—that they're not always using good risk management off duty," he said. He's coined a new term, "dilution of risk perspective," to describe this increase in accidents.

The problem, he believes, might be tied to the way risk management is handled in the combat theater. Because leaders take care of day-by-day risk management for Soldiers, they get rusty on their own personal risk management skills. This phenomenon often shows up when Soldiers come home and are confronted with dangers they haven't dealt with in a while, such as driving or motorcycling. Since they're rusty at managing those risks and believe they're safe because they're away from combat, Soldiers often drop their guard. When that happens, they become dangerously vulnerable to off-duty accidents.

There's another aspect of the decompression phase that catches many Soldiers unaware, according to 160th SOAR Regimental Safety NCO SFC Lance Hofmann. Because Soldiers have little access to alcohol in Iraq, they typically have less tolerance for its effects when they get back. They go out drinking without realizing the alcohol will hit them harder than before their deployment. If they're behind the wheel of a car or on a motorcycle when that happens, the results can be deadly.

Finally, after surviving combat and returning home, it's natural for a Soldier to feel "bulletproof," Hofmann said. "They've experienced the worst the world has to offer, so when they get back here they let down their guard." He explained it's essential that units talk to their Soldiers about safety before releasing them for a long weekend or leave.

Hofmann added these briefs might be particularly important for single Soldiers. Sometimes, in the desire to distance themselves from all they've been surrounded by during their deployment, they go off and drink alone. With no family member or buddy to watch out for them, they're at very high risk.

Timing is essential to keeping Soldiers safe after they've returned home, according to Hofmann. "If you allow a Soldier to take a four-day pass and then talk to him about safety AFTER he comes back, you've missed the window when he was at greatest risk."

Racing, Rocks, & Road Rash!

ANONYMOUS

My father told me throughout high school I couldn't have a motorcycle because they were dangerous. When I turned 18, I decided my father didn't know anything. I moved to Tucson, Ariz., to attend college. Once there, I went straight out and bought a brand-new Suzuki Katana 600cc bike.

I thought my new bike was awesome. It was black with gold rims and had more power than any motorcycle I'd ever seen. That wasn't saying much, however, because I'd never ridden a motorcycle. I had enough sense to make the dealership throw in a helmet in the purchase price, which was the extent of my wheeling and dealing.

A couple months later I was out riding with a friend. He had a Yamaha FZR 600 and had been riding motorcycles since he was a kid. At about 1 a.m., we challenged each other to a race down a deserted road. I decided my "experience"—all two months of it—was more than a match for his lifetime of racing experience. We lined up, and I revved my engine a couple of times to "intimidate" my competitor.

Things were going well until I took a turn at 70 mph and hit a patch of sand. My bike went off the road, and I was able to slow down a little. I went over the handlebars at about 45 mph and landed head-first in a pile of rocks. I bounced off the rocks back onto the road, using my right elbow as a brake. It was at least five minutes before I could move or feel anything.

Even though I didn't have any skin left on my right elbow, I walked away from this accident. I hopped on the back of my friend's bike and went to a pay phone to call a tow truck. From there we went to the emergency room. I hadn't broken anything, but for months it hurt to move my arm while the skin regrew over my elbow. My helmet was destroyed, but it did its job well. It hurt to spend money on a new helmet, but I can't think of many better investments.

This accident taught me a lot of hard lessons. Racing on the streets wasn't the smartest thing I've ever done. Racing at night was even dumber. After the accident, I made sure I got motorcycle training from a place more reputable than me. The one thing I did right was wear my helmet. That one good decision is why I'm here to tell this story today.

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Unnatural selexions

Yes, that's a *motorcycle* lying across the front seat of a Volkswagen. The driver of this Honda motorcycle was traveling at an estimated 155 mph when he T-boned the Volkswagen at an intersection. Police investigators said the bike was moving so fast its driver didn't have time to apply the brakes as the Volkswagen came into view. The car flipped numerous times from the impact. The motorcycle and its driver were found inside the car, along with the Volkswagen's driver and one passenger. All three were killed instantly.

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